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The President's Daily Brief

17 March 1969
(Afternoon)

19

~~*Top Secret*~~

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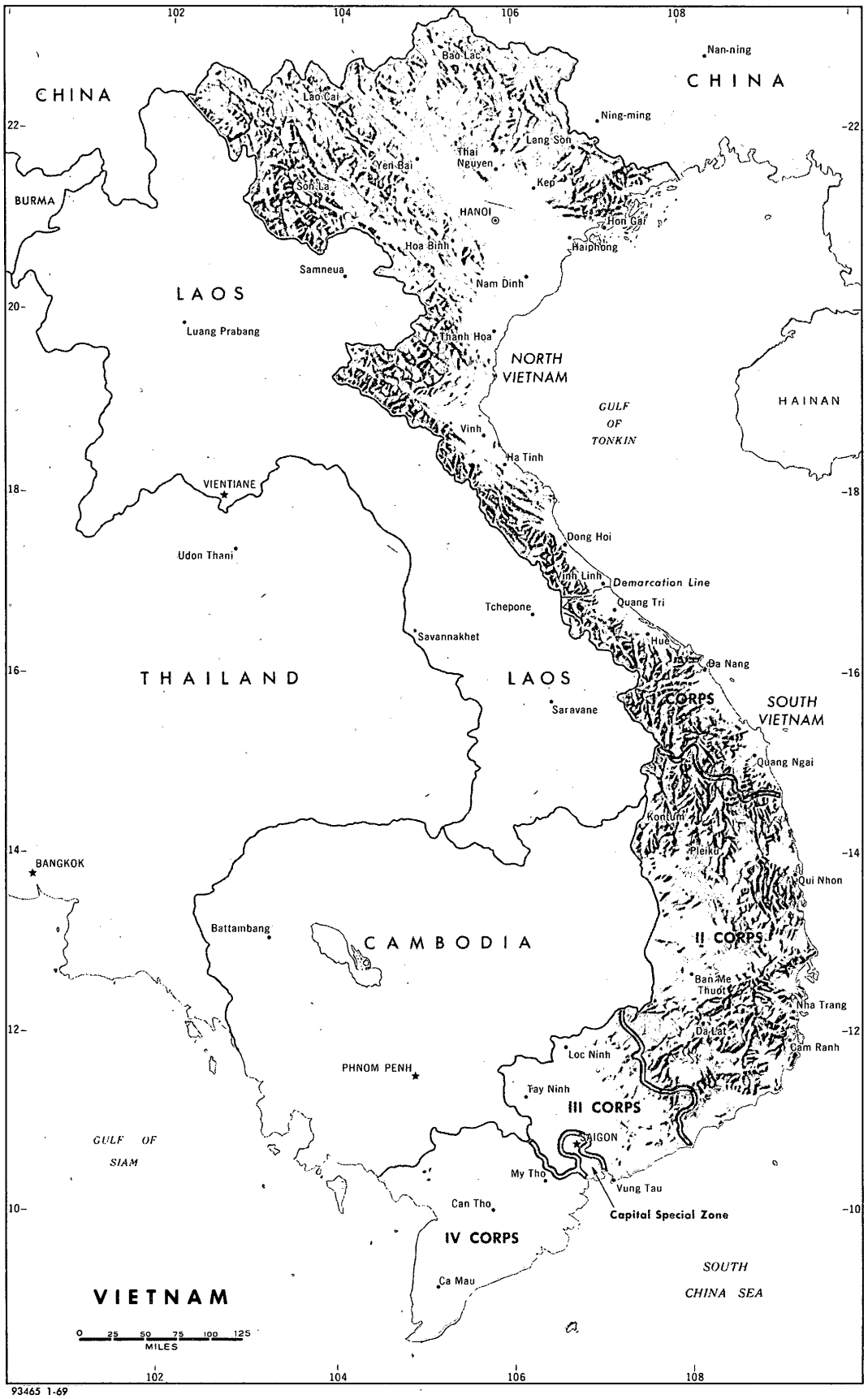

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LATE NOTES FOR THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

OF 17 MARCH 1969

[redacted]

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18 March 1969

LATE NOTES FOR THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF OF 17 MARCH 1969

I. MAJOR PROBLEMS

VIETNAM

Enemy-initiated actions in the capital military district were about double the usual rate last night. These include a terrorist incident in Saigon and five firefights in Gia Dinh Province; casualties were light.

Elsewhere, the situation was relatively quiet. [redacted] 50X1

[redacted] 50X1

SOVIET AFFAIRS

The story behind the 120-minute Warsaw Pact summit conference in Budapest yesterday has not yet unfolded. The main point in the final communiqué merely states that the participants approved "new regulations on combined armed forces and combined commands." This suggests that the discussions--at least nominally--succeeded in drawing the member states into closer military cooperation. Rumania's readiness to subscribe to the new arrangements, however, may well mean that little has changed. The Rumanians have long resisted Russian efforts to obtain control over Rumania's armed forces.

A Washington Post story this morning alleges that the Rumanians vetoed a major Soviet effort to "integrate" Rumania's forces under the Pact. The New York Times claims that disagreement emerged at the meeting over a Soviet attempt to get a resolution condemning the Chinese as "aggressors." There is nothing substantial at this point to back either of these claims.

The Soviet leaders are already en route back to Moscow by train. The Rumanians, East Germans, and probably others have also left. This means that there was little or no time for bilateral talks after the formal meeting adjourned.

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[redacted] 50X1

(Central Intelligence Bulletin, Press, News Ticker)

EUROPE

There is nothing significant to report.

MIDDLE EAST

Cairo radio says the Israelis shelled Egyptian positions south of the Bitter Lakes area of the Suez Canal today.

[redacted] 50X1

II. OTHER IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS

SOVIET UNION - COMMUNIST CHINA

A Pravda military correspondent claims that Chinese forces fired on Russian border troops with mortars and machineguns last night near the disputed island. There was no mention of casualties. [redacted] 50X1

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I. MAJOR PROBLEMS

VIETNAM

Enemy-initiated actions declined on 16-17 March, following the spate of shellings and ground actions over the weekend. Hue, Da Nang, and Saigon were free of terrorist activity. Sharp new engagements were reported northeast of Saigon, however, and in Kontum Province in the central highlands.

SOVIET AFFAIRS

Today's Warsaw Pact summit meeting ended two hours after it began with the participating countries signing a "declaration on Europe" and a final communiqué. It was the shortest meeting ever held. The start was delayed from morning until afternoon, probably to permit time for bilateral discussions either on the Sino-Soviet border conflict or on the final wording of one or both of the documents.

The circumstances are most unusual, however, and it is not at all clear what is going on.

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EUROPE

In a public opinion poll earlier this month, 77 percent of those Frenchmen queried thought the recent trip of President Nixon constituted an important element for the evolution

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of good relations between France and the US (35 percent very important and 42 percent rather important). A majority--52 percent--continued to feel that France should neither be on the side of the US nor the USSR. Those who felt that France should be on the side of the US rose from 13 percent in 1967 and 19 percent in 1968 to 24 percent in 1969.

MIDDLE EAST

There is nothing significant to report.

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II. OTHER IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS

KOREA

Four North Korean infiltrators yesterday attacked a police station on South Korea's east coast about 55 miles south of the Demilitarized Zone. This was the first armed infiltration since approximately 120 guerrillas landed along the east coast last November. The raiders, dressed in South Korean military uniforms, killed one policeman and a civilian and planted a time bomb in the police station before shooting their way out of the harbor and sailing north. The attack probably was coordinated with current North Korean harassment along the DMZ in connection with the US - South Korean military exercises.

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SOVIET UNION - COMMUNIST CHINA

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Soviet aircraft have not flown to Hanoi through China for several months. Inauguration of the new route at this time may be connected with recent Soviet-Chinese border incidents.

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In February 1965, after the US began the bombing of North Vietnam, Moscow tried to send 30 AN-12s to Hanoi with military aid. [redacted] 50X1

[redacted] 50X1

[redacted] 50X1

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